

THE

STYLE INVITATIONAL TURNS

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Hard to believe, isn't it? The Style Invitational, which began as a disreputable little newspaper contest with crummy prizes and no sense of decency, has now become a disreputable little 10-year-old newspaper contest with crummy prizes and no sense of decency.

The contest began humbly on March 7, 1993, with a challenge to redress a cultural affront and rename the Redskins. The winning entry, by Douglas R. Miller of Arlington, was suitably contrarian: "Call them the Baltimore Redskins—No, don't move the team, just change the name and let Baltimore worry about it."

That was 495 contests ago. In the interim, The Style Invitational—run autocratically by a mysterious, reclusive figure known only as "The Czar"—has staked out a position as the least Washington Post-like feature ever to weasel its way into The Washington Post. It is sometimes subversive, occasionally mean-spirited, frequently rude, often immature, always arrogant, and at times just about inexcusable. We are not sure why it has survived; it's possible Donald Graham does not read the inside of the Style section.

Over the years, The Style Invitational somehow managed to launch the international stardom of cartoonist Bob Staake, an otherwise negligible talent whose scramble-featured characters suggest the work of a blind man.

Calling itself "the last pure meritocracy on Earth," and stubbornly resisting complaints of favoritism, the contest has also made minor celebrities of a handful of fiendishly clever and uncommonly persistent readers. These include Chuck Smith of Woodbridge, Russell Beland of Springfield, Tom Witte of Gaithersburg, Chris Doyle of Burke, Stephen Dudzik of Olney, and, of course, J. Ha—Jennifer Hart of Arlington, The Style Invitational's most decorated woman.

The contest for this week is to submit new entries to any of the old contests mentioned below, and try to beat **The Very Best of the Past 10 Years**. There's the usual deadline of a week and a day, and the usual e-mail address, users@washpost.com. (Just call it "Week 496." Roman numerals are now history.) The prize, in honor of our Tin Anniversary, is a dented tin cup imprinted with the illustration above.

If you're reading this, Don, there's nothing

much below. Nothing to see here. Just along to Book World.